

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING WHY



### Deciding When to Use New Technology

Before we had “social media” we had “social drinking” and, of course, “social diseases” – that euphemism for those things only bad people got. While technology has surrounded this profession, the last dose of technology this industry universally appreciated was gravity. Today we talk about the new-fangled technology as if every funeral home in America has actually abandoned their push letter message boards. Nope, I am a cynic. I know better. So, when I have to write about “new technology,” I am going old school.

To me, all the technological tools available to this profession are wonderful. Some are more wonderful than others. Those that actually work are really super wonderful.

Don't lump me in a class of those funeral curmudgeons that still brag that, “I don't even know how to turn on a computer!” I do. I ran a technology company that had more than 300 firms using state-of-the-art funeral software, 500 using aging art software, and I monitored more than 1,100 websites. I have also created

my own management consulting software with SRS Computing. I know technology. However, as a management consultant to this profession, everyone is starting on second base, and we all know in baseball you can't do that.

In order to employ any form of technology in your business or building you have got to ask yourself the one question that gets you to first base. It is a simple question. It is one word. That word is, “Why?”

Pick any type of technology and ask

that one word and you can then start to define whether you need it or how cool it really is. For example, it wasn't that long ago that someone chose to use an automobile to do a removal rather than the horse and hearse that had been used. So, ask “Why?”

Well, have you ever hitched two horses to a wagon? In the days before automobiles, if someone wanted to do a removal of a body from the place of death, that party had to hitch the horses to the wagon. That could take about two hours to accomplish. You have to groom the horses, get all the straps in place and when you returned with the body you had about another hour to get those horses fed and placed back in their pen. This does not include the fact that the horses would walk about 4 miles per hour and the first cars were going around 30 miles per hour. Time to get the motorized hearse ready to do a removal: one minute. Time to put it away: one minute. Time en route: 10 minutes; the horse trip could be 40 minutes. Round trip from start to finish via horse would be four

hours, while the motorized hearse would be 20 minutes total. Who would not see that as a remarkable opportunity?

To my way of thinking all the salespeople out there trying to tell me why their software or gizmo is better than another company's software or gizmo are trying to sell me on second base. Let's start with these items and see if I need them or want them in the first place. Let's jump a hundred years forward and look at each of these "new, new" things one at a time.

### Management Software

Funeral management software may be the most difficult to discuss because of the many things it can do, but most funeral home owners don't use all of the capabilities. Start off with the print function for prayer cards and folders. Let us ask "Why?"

Well, if I merely want something to help me print out my folders, I don't really need to spend thousands of

dollars for some difficult program just to print pretty pictures.

How about the functionality of the database, logging in my cases? If I don't look at the cases, and since I still have to print out the forms and get original signatures on my files, once again there is no great benefit to having this. If I want to track my families, stay in touch with them, see what merchandise I am selling and revenue I am generating, then there is a benefit to the software. In fact, if I can get it to do all that and print out fancy offerings, then this stuff is a bargain.

If I can get my management software to integrate with an accounting software, now I have a trifecta of savings. But why would I want to have accounting software when I have an accountant? To me, this is (with all due respect) more a discussion on the horse-drawn hearse and the motorized hearse. Why should I work, run my business and constantly be looking at my financial information in the

rearview mirror?

Most accountants get the information about three weeks after the close of a month. They need some time to input the data and get this back to you. You close the month of January on Jan. 31, but you don't get your accounting statements back until March 15? You are running your business based upon case count and cash in the bank, which is like using night vision glasses but not putting batteries in them. The use of accounting software is simple, cheap and produces results in real time. When you couple the revenue from the funeral management software and the expenses from your electronic checkbook, you have profit and loss statements that are as current as you are.

### Websites

Many of you today have websites. I wish it was 100 percent of all funeral businesses, but it is not. In fact, it is closer to 80 percent, but that is a remarkable increase over the past

#### How will I know

## when it's time to sell my business?

**When the only call you want to answer is the call of the wild.**

*You answered your calling. But as you enter the next phase of your life, you may find that something else speaks to you - the desire to spend more time with your family or to pursue a new career or hobby, the ability to travel, or the freedom just to relax and enjoy your retirement.*

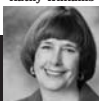


*Whatever your reason, whenever it's time, AFC is ready to help. From appraising your business to finding a buyer, to negotiating terms and helping with the transition... we'll be with you every step of the way, helping you get to whatever is calling you next.*

Melissa Drake



Kathy Williams



**AFC** American Funeral Consultants 40<sup>+</sup>

Certified Business Appraisals – Sales & Acquisitions – Minority Stock Assessments  
Family Business Issues – Business Plans – Feasibility & Market Studies  
Funeral Contract & Income Analyses – Enhancement of Revenue Streams & Cash Flow  
Building Budgets – all to suit your unique business needs and goals.

(800) 832-6232 ❖ [www.TeamAFC.com](http://www.TeamAFC.com) ❖ visit us on

Also fits bronze plaque when mounted to concrete or granite base



Grave Marker Support Device

Call Today!  
**800.742.9169**

[www.MonumentGuard.com](http://www.MonumentGuard.com)



MADE IN USA

several years. In 2005, I estimated that only 50 percent of all funeral homes had websites, but when you remove locations belonging to large companies, we were left with about 30 percent of privately-owned businesses having websites.

The No. 1 reason that families come to a website is to obtain obituary information. With the decline in newspapers and the increase of online news dissemination, it seems like a no-brainer to have a website – for the obituary information, at least. However, I must reprimand this great profession because we have let newspapers teach us how to write an obituary. Newspapers either offered obits for free, but limited the space, or they started to charge by the word. Either way, they taught us to eliminate adjectives and adverbs to save space. Within the past decade, they taught us to use a picture, but they limited the offer to one graphic per obituary.

In the virtual world, we are not limited in space. The bandwidth is not

different between a 100-word and 1,000-word obituary. We shouldn't be limited by one picture. The virtual world can hold oodles of pictures and the pictures can be supplied by the arranging family or by the mourners giving pictures to the family. So long as we are not dealing with the burial of Charlie Sheen, we shouldn't be too worried about what pictures are submitted for posting.

Now, let's recognize that families are making decisions about using your funeral home and wanting to determine costs before they show up. Just as restaurants can post their menus, you can post your prices and offerings. You can educate your families with voice-overs or video inserts to get a complete understanding of the issues they are facing. A modern day tool is the "live host," which is a video explaining how to navigate around the website.

The "why" should be obvious. It is not just the "why" of the website, but it is the why of, "Do I need a virtual

business to complement my bricks and mortar business?"

We all know what it is like to stand by the front door, opening it as a person walks into your building. We see it. We visualize the eye contact. Well, that might happen three times a day or 100 times a month to your brick and mortar business, without a visitation, arrangement or service taking place. However, for your virtual business you should have about 100 people come in per call, per month. Even a 120-call business will have about 1,000 people come into its virtual business. That is 10 times more than your physical location. If I am correct (and I am) why are we not building Taj Majal websites to make people feel comfortable?

There are many new tools out there to consider. Let's figure out what sets the right image and gets the job done on a timely basis, while at the same time giving families peace of mind. The new technology is really old common sense – use it. •



CLS Series

Interested in front-end to back-end communication instantly at the push of a button?  
 How about communicating during the procession or while parking cars?  
 Ask 2WayRadioPlus about Motorola Two-Way radios today!



DTR Series





**MOTOROLA**  
Authorized Business Two-Way Radio Reseller



CLP Series

**Ask how you can receive up to \$2400 cash back with the purchase of select Motorola Radios!!!**

www.2wayradioplus.com | 888-243-9799 | info@2wayradioplus.com

MOTOROLA, MOTO, MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS and the Stylized M logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Motorola Trademark Holdings, LLC and are used under license. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. © 2012 Motorola Solutions, Inc. All rights reserved.